

Statements by the
Subjects Committee of the
World Conference on
Faith and Order



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Subjects Committee

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Please send the names and addresses of any persons who might be interested in the preparations.

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The Statements embodied in this pamphlet are based upon replies received from local discussion groups, and upon correlative material, with reference to four series of Questions sent out in 1920-1925, as follows :

The Faith of the reunited Church.
The Church.
The Ministry in the reunited Church.
The Sacraments.

This material is sent, by direction of the Business Committee, to persons appointed to attend the Conference in 1927, for such use as they may desire to make of it.

CONCERNING THE FAITH OF THE REUNITED CHURCH.

Statement prepared in September 1923 by the Subjects Committee, in view of replies to questions circulated and in view of other treatments of the subject.

It being acknowledged that the Church was founded by the Will of God expressed through His Son Jesus Christ, and is maintained by the same Will, it has to be determined what on the human side is necessary to the unity and the life of the Church.

1. It is agreed that it is necessary for every member of the Church to have a hearty belief or trust in God as He has revealed Himself to men in His Son Jesus Christ, and that this revelation must be brought home to their hearts by His Holy Spirit.

2. In the historical creeds the typical phrase "I believe in" means more than intellectual assent to a proposition or propositions; it means trust in and self-devotion to a Person Whose Nature is declared by the names, attributes and propositions which follow. For instance, "I believe in God the Father," does not only nor even primarily mean, "I believe that God is the Father," but "I utterly trust in, and completely devote myself to God, being, as He is, the Father." Thus those who use the historical creeds with understanding recognise in them, not compendious statements of intellectual positions, but means whereby individuals and bodies of men may make profession of that faith which is the heart's trust in a Person.

3. At the same time "heart's trust" has intellectual implications. The need for setting out these implications varies with varying occasions and also with the capacities of those who make the professions.

4. Such statements of the heart's trust in God, with less or greater development of its intellectual implications, commonly take the form to which the name *creed* has been given. Creeds have been put to various uses, of which it is not necessary here to treat more than four, viz., (1) the profession of faith at baptism (baptismal

or beginners' creeds), and, as connected with this, instruction before baptism or before admission to the full privileges of membership in the Church ; (2) the protection of the Church against false doctrine (the creeds of the Councils or Teachers' Creeds) ; (3) confession of faith to God, especially in public worship ; (4) confession of faith as witness before men (for this purpose longer statements such as the " Confessions " of the Reformation Age have also been used).

5. From the earliest times some verbal expression of this faith or " heart's trust " has been deemed to be necessary before admission to the Church. Hence arose the baptismal creeds. Attention may well be given to the experience gained from the instruction of adult converts from other religions as well as from the instruction of simple people who have been baptised in infancy. Both these forms of instruction witness to the advantage of the teaching about our Lord Jesus Christ by means of the facts of His life. This practical advantage coincides with doctrinal truth.

6. The present facts are that where a creed is used for the purposes mentioned in the preceding section, the Apostles' Creed is generally used, except by the Orthodox Church which uses the Nicene Creed, and that, where a creed is not used, instruction in the faith before, and profession of faith at the time of, baptism or admission to the full privileges of membership in the Church follow the general lines of the Apostles' Creed, though both that instruction and that profession may, and the instruction often does, go into greater detail.

7. It is suggested that agreement might be reached that the profession of faith at Baptism should be made either by means of the Apostles' Creed or of the Nicene Creed or by acceptance of the substance of one of those creeds, according as any Church may determine.

8. Besides having a statement whereby beginners in Christ may profess their heart's trust in God, it is reasonable that the Church should also have more advanced and detailed statements for the guidance of its teachers and the avoidance of error. It will be agreed that the Holy Spirit gave the Church the best answer for each time to the actual questions of that time. These statements varied from relatively short creeds, which differed very little in length or contents from the baptismal creeds, to very long

statements, sometimes called Confessions. While such statements of the belief of the Church as a teaching Church are necessary for the instruction and guidance of its teachers and for explanation of their commission to teach, the place of any one of them in relation to the whole Church depends on the relative importance of the problems with which it deals.

9. The Nicene Creed was in origin such a statement and in many parts of the Church holds at the present time a preëminent place, while most Churches define more fully than is done in that Creed the standard of doctrine which their teachers are commissioned to teach. It will be for the United Church to consider how it will conserve in the teaching given on its behalf the unity of doctrine which exists in it. But in the meantime it is likely to be agreed that that teaching must include, as its centre, the substance of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.

10. At the same time it will be regarded as reasonable that different parts of the United Church should from time to time adopt or draw up more detailed statements of doctrine for the guidance of their teachers, always provided that they be in accordance with the revelation of God contained in the Holy Scriptures ; and whether they be so, or not, it will be for the United Church to decide.

11. It has been a custom in many parts of the Church to recite some form of creed in public worship. This for the individual worshipper is an act of renewal of his heart's trust in God and of thankfulness to God for the revelation of Himself which He has given. It is for the congregation a corporate act of reaffirmation of the dependence on God which makes their common worship acceptable to Him and binds them one to another. Some churches have chosen for this purpose the baptismal creed as that most generally intelligible ; others one of the fuller creeds, which, when used in public worship, may be regarded as an expression of the mind of the whole Church or of the ideal to which the mind of the individual may attain.

Note : It should be remembered that while there is some early evidence of the use of the Creeds as ' hymns, ' they were not primarily intended for recitation in public worship. However, similar dogmatic material is in free general use, for purposes of exultant or thankful corporate professions, in some of the great

hymns of the Church : e. g., *Te Deum Laudamus*, *Adeste Fideles*, and Luther's hymn, *Wir glauben all' an einen Gott*.

12. This recitation of the creed in public worship is a godly practice, but is not essential to the unity and the life of the Church. It is suggested that any part of the Church should be free to use either the Nicene or the Apostles' Creed, or both, in public worship, or, if to its proper authorities it seem better, not to recite a creed in public worship.

13. In regard to the use of creeds for the purpose of bearing witness before men, we may advert to the custom in the earliest times of presenting the creed of a local Church to other Churches with a view to showing that the first-named Church held the truth and agreed with the rest of Christendom. We may also mention the object which was sought to be attained by various later Confessional statements framed "in order that the consent of the Churches might appear." The united Church will desire to bear witness to the decisive and fundamental truths which it professes and teaches, and the World Conference, as preparing for the united Church, will be concerned to give such witness, and in this connection will need to make some declaration of the common faith of Christendom whether by means of an ancient formula, or by means of a declaration couched in more modern terms.

14. It is suggested, further, that it is not beyond the competence of the universal Church, when once more united, to frame another creed either for one of the above-mentioned established purposes of a creed, or for some other purpose not hitherto contemplated, always provided that such new creed be in accordance with the revelations of God recorded in Holy Scripture, and that neither the framing of the new creed nor that creed when framed bring into question the validity of the two creeds above mentioned, viz., the Nicene Creed and the Apostles' Creed, for the purposes for which and the times in which they were framed, and for use by all persons or Churches who desire to retain their use for the said purposes.

15. It is suggested, again, that it may be competent for any part of the universal Church when united to adopt with the consent of the whole Church a new form of creed for any of the purposes above mentioned or for some purpose not hitherto contemplated.

CONCERNING THE CHURCH

Statement prepared in July 1925 by the Subjects Committee after considering the replies to questions regarding the Church, and intended for the information of the members of the World Conference on Faith and Order. This Statement is designed to indicate the amount of agreement already existing among Christians on this subject, and the most hopeful lines of approach for further agreement.

1. The Origin and essential Nature of the Church. The origin of the Church is in the purpose of God. Historically He first revealed that purpose by choosing and training Israel as His peculiar people, and making it a national Church, and then adopting the faithful remnant of Israel — those who accepted Jesus as Messiah — to be the nucleus of a universal Church. On this nucleus He poured out the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, thus giving to His Church a new, active, and visible existence as the body of His ascended Son. To this body of Christ the Father has ever since been drawing new members. Their membership consists in their union with Christ, and this union is at the same time a communion with one another. The one Spirit dwells in this body, directing and sustaining it, and the Church is “the fellowship of the Spirit.”

Thus the Church not only owes its existence to a series of acts of the will of God, but also is essentially and at all times the body of His Son and the fellowship of His Spirit.

2. The Purpose or Chief End of the Church. This fellowship has certain definite objects. It is the body of the Saviour of the world, with which He is carrying out His work of salvation. It shares His life, and like Him and with Him gives it for the life of the world. Through it He wills to bring light to men, delivering them from the darkness of sin and ignorance. Through it he is publishing the Good News and is bringing about the reconciliation of men to God, and winning them gladly to accept

the Sovereignty of God. Through it He wills to show by example how men can love God and their neighbours and make that love the characteristic feature of their life.

3. Agreement on these Two Points. It seems that the most hopeful line along which to seek for agreement concerning the *conception of the Church* is that which is followed in the two preceding paragraphs. There is agreement about the divine source of the Church's life : namely, that the Church is constituted by the relation to it of Christ and His Spirit. There is also agreement about the purposes and tasks of the Church. But these lines of approach to an agreed conception of the Church are not sufficient.

4. The body of Christ : how formed and held together. Since the Church is a body, it must have a certain structure or form, and principles of coherence, and they should appear in that part of the Church which is yet upon earth. Though there are some differences of opinion on this portion of the subject, there is already a large measure of agreement. First, the Church is held together by the common faith of its members in God as revealed and incarnate in Christ ; and this faith is not only a private gift of God to individuals, but a belief publicly professed, and by its public profession marking off the Church from the world. Again, the Sacraments which our Lord instituted are in a true sense constitutive of His body : the one, Baptism, incorporating members into that body ; the other, the Lord's Supper, strengthening in His faithful people the common life which is in Him, and at the same time bringing them into union with that sacrifice which He offered to His Father and enabling His members to make their corporate self-oblation in Him. Again, the Church is bound together by the glorious common inheritance of the Word, written in the Scriptures and preached in the Church, and the continual teaching of the Spirit through the Word. Again, it has been and ought to be bound together by the ministry given to it by Christ, leading, directing, and forming it under Him, the Chief Shepherd. Further, it ought to be bound together by the common endeavour, consciously made, to live as a consecrated society, and to win the world for Christ — in a word, by obvious and effective participation in the Holy War.

5. The Church, Visible and Invisible. There is a very large measure of agreement that the Church ought to be bound to-

gether by great facts and principles such as have just been mentioned ; and if it were so bound together, the Church on earth would again be visibly one. But here we come upon one of the difficulties of the present day. We all admit that, since the Church is the body of the one Christ and is animated by the one Spirit, it is itself one. We also admit that that part of it which consists of those who have passed beyond mortal sight, is necessarily invisible. But those other members of the Church who are still living upon earth are themselves visible, and it seems natural to conclude that their unity ought to be visible. It was so once. There was the one Church, which no one could mistake. To-day there are the Churches. They are the obvious visible facts. The Church on earth is in no effective sense one. Our great difficulty is that in lands which have long been Christian many people feel no sorrow about this. Either they think that their own Church is the only true Church and the rest are not true Churches, or they fall back upon a unity of faith, not of sight — a unity known to God only, the unity of His elect and redeemed servants — and declare that the true unity of the invisible Church is not impaired by the comparatively unimportant divisions of the visible Church.

6. Dissatisfaction with former Methods of defining the Church. There is an increasing number of Christian men and women who cannot be satisfied with either of these solutions. To them it is obvious that no one of the existing Churches is the one and only true Church, because they dare not deny that the work done in other Churches is Christ's work and is a result of a true fellowship in His Spirit. Nevertheless they cannot justify or even condone the divisions which have substituted " the Churches " for the one Church on earth. It is too clear that these divisions are contrary to the purposes of our one Head and of the one Spirit. It is too clear that they impede the Lord in carrying on His saving work. It is too clear that where the Spirit of the Lord is deeply felt, it is felt to be yearning for brotherhood. It is not enough that there should be some hidden inward unity. The inward strains to manifest itself in an outward. The one Spirit wants a body effectively and obviously one. The one Lord and the one Spirit still have a body which is one, in paradise and on earth, but that part of it which is on earth is disabled by its divisions as well as weakened by other diseases, and its sins and its divisions react one upon another, increasing its impotence:

7. Effects of this Dissatisfaction. These considerations have two effects which should be noted here. First, they make men increasingly unwilling to answer the question, "Where is the Church?" by means of any marks or tests except the presence of the Spirit shown in the accomplishing of Christ's saving work. Thus one of the most careful replies sent in to the Subjects Committee says: "In its fullest sense, the Church is 'the blessed company of all faithful people,' whether on earth or beyond the veil. As visible on earth it is the fellowship of those who are redeemed through Christ and who accept His will to witness and service in the power of the Holy Spirit and of a supernatural life of which love is the characteristic grace." Second, the moment this position is accepted, there ought to be a strong reaction of shame and resolve: of shame that the body of Christ is so disabled as it is by our divisions, and of resolve to do all that in us lies to restore to that part of the body of Christ which is on earth the unity so essential to His idea and to His work. It will be one side of the work of the Conference to quicken that sense of shame and to strengthen and direct that resolve.

8. Conference on Cardinal Points. The Conference will therefore turn to the consideration of those things which have been always found to be both means and marks of unity. It will note the agreements which it finds still to exist among Christians, and it will endeavour to reach agreement where in matters of cardinal importance it does not exist. All or most of the matters mentioned in paragraph 4 are cardinal in the sense that the restoration of corporate unity hinges upon the attainment of an agreed opinion about them.

9. The Church and the Churches. There is another question of great importance for unity, which is often referred to as "the relation of the Church and the Churches." We believe that the one Church of Jesus Christ really exists. At the same time, as was observed above, "the Churches" are to-day the obvious, visible facts. These Churches are of two types. In the New Testament the Churches spoken of were local, and they were the local representatives of the one Church. Some of the Churches of to-day are of this character. Others, however, are of a different type altogether, being composed of persons living in different and often distant localities and united to one another by a common concern for some particular doctrine or practice or method of organisation, who by some historical circumstances have become

separated from other Christians and organised themselves as separate Churches. Though it is acknowledged that these Churches have sometimes rescued from neglect and fruitfully exemplified some truth or some working of God's manifold grace, yet the consequence of these separations is that there are often different or even rival denominational Churches independent of each other and existing together in the same locality, and this state of rivalry and disunion cannot be regarded as in accordance with the purpose of Christ. Every endeavour should be made to restore the true position as set forth in the New Testament, while preserving to the united Church the elements of truth and grace for which these denominational Churches in their temporary separations have contended.

10. The Central Authority of the Church. There remains one question which any body of men anxious to restore the visible unity of the Church on earth must face, and that is the question where the ultimate authority of the Church on earth should reside. Even two Churches cannot unite without settling what they, when united, will regard as the ultimate authority of the united body. The diversities of men are so great that very great local liberty may be justly claimed. The course of past history shows that œcumenical decisions on doctrine have only been given when they were most imperatively demanded, and it has been well for the Church that they have been comparatively few. Still, no picture of a reunited Christendom can be formed without including an ultimate authority, and this is among the matters with which on some occasion a World Conference dealing with Faith and Order must deal. Three forms of such an ultimate authority would be advocated by the Christians of to-day — the Pope, the Œcumenical Council in which Bishops alone vote, and an elective representative body composed both of clergy and laity. It is for future discussion to show whether one of these forms will ultimately win general consent, or whether any form can be devised which will be felt to combine the advantages of all.

11. Conflicting Opinions. We are well aware that though the conception of the Church stated in paragraphs 1 and 2 may command general consent, the conclusions drawn from it, especially in paragraphs 6 and 7, are contrary to much that is held, and has long been held, in some of the oldest and greatest Churches. The ancient Churches of the East and the West have long been accustomed to use the four attributes — One, Holy, Catholic,

and Apostolic — which are given to the Church in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed as tests by which the true Church can be found, and other Churches shown not to be the true Church nor parts of it. The Lutheran Church holds that it is of the essence of the true Church to be invisible. The members of these Churches who meet at the World Conference are asked to consider whether the views expressed above correspond more nearly to the actual facts than those to which they have been accustomed. If they do not think so, they must endeavour to persuade the Conference that their own views are right and can also become the basis of a closer union of Christendom.

Changes of opinion on the part of many or possibly all the existing Christians are necessary before we can recover the due and possible unity of the Church on earth. No real advance towards that unity can be made while there is no common conception of what that Church is for whose greater unity we are praying and working.

CONCERNING THE MINISTRY

Statement prepared in July 1925 by the Subjects Committee after considering the replies to questions regarding the Ministry of the Reunited Church, and intended for the information of the members of the World Conference on Faith and Order. This Statement is designed to indicate the amount of agreement already existing among Christians on this subject, and the most hopeful lines of approach for further agreement.

The various negotiations which have been recently conducted in different parts of the world, as well as the answers returned to the questions about the ministry which have been circulated by the Continuation Committee of the World Conference on Faith and Order, have brought into clear light the main points on this subject which interest the present generation of Christians and are found to bear upon any proposal for reunion.

POINTS OF AGREEMENT

We will begin with the points on which there appears to be general or very considerable agreement, recording them, and adding some observations or elucidations.

1. A universally recognised Ministry. There seems to be complete agreement that just as the ministry of any Church is — and must be — recognised by the whole of that Church as a due, authorised, and valid ministry, so the universal Church, if reunited, must have a universally recognised ministry.

The term “ a universally recognised ministry ” has not been as yet very narrowly scrutinised.

(a) On the one hand there has been no consideration known to us of the question whether, given a ministry which is universally recognised, parts of the Church might reasonably be regarded as free to have additional ministries (*e.g.*, Minor Orders), though other parts might prefer to confine themselves to the universally recognised ministry.

(b) Another question which has not been adequately discussed is the relation between recognition of a ministry as valid, and authorisation or license of the ministers who compose it for a sphere of work. For instance, all priests in the Roman obedience are recognised by that Church as priests with a valid ministry, but they are not therefore free to minister everywhere in the Roman Communion. In addition to the general necessity of being licensed by the Bishop of the place, there are further restrictions, e.g., Uniat priests may normally only minister to Uniat congregations, and so forth. This has been suggested as an example of a method that might be followed in reunited Christendom.

(c) A good deal of discussion has taken place on what is called the "*interim* period," i.e., the period before the arrangements for reunion have fully come into effect. It has been urged that, if reuniting bodies of Christians settled on a certain system of ordination for the future, the existing ministers who had not received ordination according to that system might continue, after the union, to minister to the congregations to whom they were theretofore qualified to minister, but not to others, unless they were willing to receive either a new ordination or a new commission. Opinion in South India is passing away from this solution, because it is felt that it would not really mean genuine recognition, and that it would leave the Church in the *interim* period disunited, but it appears still to find favour in Canada and England. We propose to say nothing further on this subject here, as the purpose of the World Conference is not to draw up a scheme of reunion, but to explore, and, if possible, to make clear, the general principles on which first greater unity and finally the reunion of Christendom might be attained.

It has been generally assumed that the universally recognised ministry must be a ministry of the Word and Sacraments. The proposal to recognise a ministry of the Word which is not, except by further authorisation, a ministry of the Sacraments meets in some quarters with opposition, though it is possible to name eminent laymen who in fact have exercised such an office, both in former times and in our own. The possibility that men should be ordained to exercise the ministry of the Sacraments and the Pastoral Office, but should require a special further authorisation to preach, though well known in practice, has not been brought into these discussions. An uncertainty about the term *ministry*

of the Word and Sacraments must remain until agreement is reached on the denotation of the word *Sacraments*.

2. Qualifications of Candidates for the Ministry. Besides the agreement mentioned in paragraph 1, there is another agreement almost as general. The subject of this is the qualifications of the minister. These are generally acknowledged to be (a) an inward call to the ministry, (b) sound faith, (c) blameless character, (d) adequate intellectual and practical training. It is clear that any candidate for ordination must be duly tested in these respects, and also that the authorities who test him will be in the future, as in the past, authorities of units smaller than the universal Church. Further, our information goes to show that the method of testing and the details of the above-mentioned training might, with general consent, be left to the authorities of such units, provided that they were recognised by the universal Church as suitable authorities for the purpose.

3. Relation of Laity to Ordination. It is also agreed that the faithful laity (whether as congregations or otherwise) should have some part in giving a consent to any man's selection for ordination. In the existing Churches this consent varies from a right of veto to a right of initiating the process which is consummated by ordination. It is not clear on our present information whether the reunited Church would or should leave the proportion of the responsibility of the faithful laity for any man's ordination to be determined by the appropriate Church authorities in different parts of the world, or would lay down any rules or guiding principles about it. It seems probable that so long as the right of the laity to share the responsibility for a man's ordination is acknowledged, the manner in which they should exercise that right would and might be left to the determination of smaller units than the universal Church.

4. What happens in Ordination ? Again, we believe that very considerable agreement could be obtained on the fundamental question, "What happens in ordination ?" We submit that it will be generally agreed that in ordination God in answer to the prayer of His Church makes a man who previously is not a minister to be a minister, and also grants to him such gifts as are needful for his ministry, which gifts, if he humbly use them, will make him able to perform it. Those who acknowledge more than one order of ministers, hold the same view about the ordination of a man

who is already in a lower order to a higher order, and so would the reunited Church if it decides to recognise more than one order of ministers. It is also agreed that the intention of any ordination should be to ordain a minister in the Church of God, and not exclusively in some particular part of it ; and after a reunion of Christendom this would be not only the intention but also the immediate actual effect of any ordination. It is also agreed that though the authority to minister is of God, yet the Church, whose minister or ministers convey that authority in God's name, does at the same time ratify and confirm for itself the authorisation to minister which is given to the man ordained.

5. Method of Ordination. It is further very widely agreed that the method of ordination should be the laying on of hands with prayer.

6. The Ministry is an Order. Again there is very wide agreement that the authority to minister conveyed by ordination is lifelong, and that the persons who have been ordained form an *ordo* (or *ordines*), and that the clergy who comprise this order (or these orders) are permanently distinguished from the laity of the Church.

POINTS OF DIFFERENCE

Thus far we are able to record an imposing body of agreement, partly existing, partly, in our judgment, attainable. There remain points on which no such agreement exists and on which its attainment is a matter of far greater difficulty. The points which we are about to mention are probably of such a character that agreement must be reached upon them before the reunion of Christendom can be accomplished — or indeed any partial reunion between two or more Churches which now differ about them.

1. The proper Minister of Ordination. The first of these questions is : “ Who is the proper minister of ordination ? ” There is a wide though not universal agreement that an unordained person cannot be a proper minister of ordination. But the crucial difference is between two views : (1) That the only proper minister of ordination is a Bishop, himself duly ordained and consecrated in the apostolical succession ; and (2) that any minister delegated by any Church to perform an ordination service is a proper minister of ordination. This difference is rendered more acute because

there is related to it a theory about certain Sacraments which is held by some who hold the former view and strongly reprobated by all who hold the latter view, namely, the theory that certain Sacraments are valid only if ministered by a priest who has been ordained by a Bishop in the apostolical succession. This theory about the validity of Sacraments need not be considered here. It will be more conveniently considered in a statement on the Sacraments. The rule that only a Bishop, who by his consecration as a Bishop in the succession of Bishops had received the authority to ordain other ministers or to consecrate, could either ordain or consecrate, subsisted till the sixteenth century in the whole Church, and still subsists in the largest part of it. It ceased to be observed in the Churches of the Reformation which ceased to have Bishops; and it cannot be observed in those founded later without Bishops. The restoration of this rule needs to be considered, not only on its own merits but in relation to the office of Bishop as a whole.

2. Ultimate Responsibility for giving Ordination. Another question about ordination on which there is disagreement is: "With whom rests the ultimate responsibility for giving or refusing ordination to any particular person?" Here again one answer is, "the Bishop" as defined above, and the other, "some body of persons representative of the Church according to the custom or constitution of each particular Church."

3. How many Orders of Ministry? A third question about ministry on which there is no agreement at present is: "How many orders of the ministry ought there to be, and what are those orders?"

The great majority of Protestants hold that there is only one order of the ministry, whether or not they have in addition elders and deacons in their Churches who are set apart for their offices by solemn services. Over against that view stand those of the Churches who conceive of the ministry as essentially multiform, whether they reckon three or seven orders, and however they make up their lists of orders, but in all these a preëminence is given to the three orders of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons.

THE QUESTION OF EPISCOPACY

The element in this difference which is regarded as most crucial is the question about episcopacy. Yet we have to report that,

where desire for union is strongest, even this crucial difference is not regarded as incapable of reconciliation. The following paragraphs from the report dated May 29, 1922, of a Joint Conference held at Lambeth between representatives of the Church of England and the English Free Churches are quoted as showing most clearly what is at present the most hopeful line of agreement.

“For the allaying of doubts and scruples in the future, and for the more perfect realisation of the truth that the ministry is a ministry of the Church, and not merely of any part thereof, means should be provided for the United Church which we desire, whereby its ministry may be acknowledged by every part thereof as possessing the authority of the whole body.

“ 8. In view of the fact that the Episcopate was from early times and for many centuries accepted, and by the greater part of Christendom is still accepted, as the means whereby this authority of the whole body is given, we agree that it ought to be accepted as such for the United Church of the future.

“ 9. Similarly, in view of the place which the Council of Presbyters and the Congregation of the Faithful had in the constitution of the early Church, and the preservation of these elements of presbyteral and congregational order in large sections of Christendom, we agree that they should be maintained with a representative and constitutional Episcopate as permanent elements in the order and life of the United Church.

“ 10. The acceptance of Episcopal Ordination for the future would not imply the acceptance of any particular theory as to its origin or character, or the disowning of past ministries of Word and Sacrament otherwise received, which have, together with those received by Episcopal Ordination, been used and blessed by the Spirit of God.” (Reprinted in Dean Bell’s *Documents on Christian Unity*, pp. 149, 150.)

A similar agreement forms part of the agreed positions which have been reached up to date in the negotiations between the Anglicans and the South India United Church. It also found favour in a mixed Conference of Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Congregationalists in Australia.

The words *constitutional and representative Episcopate* require a brief explanation. Constitutional episcopacy means that the Bishop on matters of legislation and policy cannot act alone, but must obtain the consent either of the clergy or of both the clergy and the laity of his diocese, or of the Bishops of the Province to which his Diocese belongs, or of the Synod or Council of that Province, according to the nature of each matter. But the Bishop is not the executive officer of his Diocese, obliged to carry out the decisions of its Synod or Council, nor of the Provincial Synod. In a few things — one of which is the ultimate responsibility for approving or rejecting a candidate for ordination — though the Church may lay down general rules for him, *e.g.*, that he must consult such and such persons or bodies or require such and such intellectual or other qualifications in his candidates for ordination, his discretion for the ultimate decision is absolute and irreviewable. By representative episcopacy is meant that in some manner the Bishop must be chosen by the Church, and that it is his duty both to represent his Diocese in its dealings with other parts of the Church, especially in Church Councils, and to represent the universal Church, its principles and laws, in dealing with his diocese. In brief, the episcopate does not clothe a man with anything like a personal monarchy, neither does it make him merely the highest executive officer of any Church Assembly. He is responsible only to Jesus Christ, but jointly with the other Bishops for an office which he shares with them, and the highest fruit of his office is the common and harmonious action of the Church.

We are informed on the one hand that there is now a Lutheran Bishop of Saxony, and on the other hand that Protestant Germany would not adopt any episcopacy which would involve the renewal of the connection with the historic episcopate by means of ordination in the succession, even though no theory of the succession was made a part of the necessary beliefs of the reunited Church. We have no doubt that equally strong opinions about the necessity for a return at least to the rule and custom of episcopal ordination would be expressed in other quarters, *e.g.*, by all the Eastern Orthodox Churches. This clash of opinion illustrates once more the difficulties into which we have been brought by divisions that have lasted for centuries. We find ourselves holding opinions which are actually contradictory on subjects on which agreement is necessary for any important advance

towards corporate unity. Churches and individuals who earnestly desire such an advance must reconsider even opinions for which they have stoutly contended. We cannot unite while we differ diametrically. But some or many of the opinions now held will be changed, if union is God's will and if agreement is necessary to union. If any of our friends are disquieted by such a reflection, we would ask them to remember that any change of their opinions which will really serve God's purposes will surely bring them nearer to God's truth.

CONCERNING THE SACRAMENTS.

The Subjects Committee has given as much consideration as has been possible to the problems concerned, which are the subject of questions sent out by them, and to the answers which they have received.

The following Statement and Propositions have not been drafted at a meeting of the Committee, but have been submitted to all its members ; and the members would wish it to be regarded as the nearest possible approximation to their common mind, though they would not wish to commit themselves, or the Churches which they represent, to every detail contained in them.

THE WORD " SACRAMENT "

Some of the bitterest controversies in the history of Christianity have turned upon the doctrine of Sacraments. No one could say that these controversies are completely settled. Indeed, a casual observer would probably affirm that insuperable difficulties in the way of the union of the Christians of our generation are presented by their doctrines or denials about Sacraments, whether in the wider or the narrower sense in which that word is used. The purpose of this statement, as of the previous statements of the Subjects Committee, is to point out the extent of actual agreement and the direction of possible further agreement.

We do not propose to attempt here a definition of the word *Sacrament*, and most of us doubt whether a Conference on Unity need do so. The real matter which the Conference must consider is the rites themselves, whether they be called Sacraments or not, and whether they can all be brought under one definition or not. Many, if not all, of the attempted definitions of the word have been framed chiefly with the object of describing the rites which it was thought well to call by that name, and of excluding others to which it was not thought properly to apply. In any case the rites came first, and the attempt to reach a common conception

of them came afterwards. However, it is clear that in the two Sacraments ordained by Christ there is an outward visible sign and an inward spiritual grace. No believer in Sacraments, indeed, would deny that grace is given through the Word, when the Gospel is preached without any language but that of words being used. But those who have experience of the difficulties of translating words from one language to another are specially able to recognise the wisdom of God in providing means of expressing His gracious purposes which need no translation. Such means interpret the words which accompany them more intelligibly than they can be explained by the words. In all rites that have ever been called Sacraments, with the possible exception of Penance, there has been believed to be (as well as spoken words) an appropriate and significant action and a bestowal of God's grace.

Neither do we propose in this statement to discuss the use of the word *Sacrament*. The number of the rites classed under that word has varied at different times and in different parts of the Church. Reunion would involve the overcoming of difficulties in this matter of terminology; but we do not think that those difficulties would prove insuperable.

On the other hand, the reunion of Christendom seems to be scarcely possible without some agreement about the rites themselves, which we are about to consider one by one. There are, however, certain problems which may be raised about all or almost all of them. On these problems we propose to make a few observations to start with, because the solutions attempted may be applied by the reader to each rite in turn, and also because we think that agreement on these more general problems, if it could be reached, would be the most hopeful method of approach to agreement on the questions raised by each of these holy rites separately.

GOD'S PART AND MAN'S PART

1. The most important of these general problems concerns the nature of God's activity in Sacraments and similar rites and its effect upon men. On the one hand some Christians emphasise God's part in such a rite almost to the exclusion of anything else. He confers grace in the rite by means of certain outward signs or acts done on His behalf by men. When this is insisted upon

without any mention of the conditions in the recipient which are necessary to the reception of grace, the doctrine so stated is accused of being magical and non-ethical. On the other hand, there is a view which is the opposite of that just stated and sometimes a conscious reaction from it, which regards the dispositions of the recipients of a Sacrament as all-important and denies that anything at all happens unless persons receiving a Sacrament have faith and other appropriate dispositions. In modern times this view reappears in the form of attributing all the so-called effects of Sacraments or similar rites to suggestion or auto-suggestion..

We would submit that neither of these extreme views represents the complete truth, and that it is inconceivable that Christians can be united on the basis of either the former or the latter alone. Further, the mediating conception here is very plain, and, if accepted, would cut away the ground from much controversy. In every Sacrament or similar rite which the Church is justified in using, God wills to give grace of a certain kind and does in fact do all that on His part is necessary for the giving of that grace ; but, if any particular person is to benefit by it, he must, so far as he can, receive it with faith and with a willingness to co-operate with God. The effects whether immediate or subsequent are the results of the meeting of these two activities — the activity of God in giving and the activity of man in receiving. The Church has been entrusted with the duty of bringing these two activities into contact, of bringing the power of God near to men, generation after generation, and of bringing individuals into a favourable situation for experiencing God's power. On such a view a great part of the objections to Sacraments disappear, being shown to be only objections to one-sided conceptions about Sacraments.

IS DOCTRINAL DISAGREEMENT COMPATIBLE WITH UNITY ?

2. There is the further problem which arises more markedly in this section of the subjects of our Conference than in any other — the problem of the range of disagreement in doctrine compatible with unity. It is obvious that if it is the will of God to reunite His Church soon, it must also be His will to leave in it, for a time at least, a multitude of divergent views. With regard to this problem we place before the members of the Conference three observations for their consideration :

(a) It is impossible to define *a priori* what is the extent of doctrinal disagreement which can be tolerated among those who are in full communion with one another in the one body of Christ. Every case must be taken separately, and the Church must come to an agreement whether such and such views are possible within the one body.

(b) When persons are in the one fellowship and able to meet and influence each other as loved and respected members of one body, then they tend to understand one another and to value the different elements of truth which each holds precious ; then a higher synthesis is possible. When they are members of separate, still more of competing and antagonistic, bodies, then they tend to neglect everything said and taught in other bodies, and to exaggerate their own opinion in a one-sided manner, and the exaggeration rapidly passes into error.

(c) Truth is gained by men through conviction. To conviction liberty is necessary. To the right use of this liberty it is necessary that all sides of truth should be accessible to the thinking man. Thus the unity of the whole Church is necessary to truth. This must not be forgotten in the very justifiable insistence on the other principle, that truth is necessary to unity.

(d) On the other hand, the whole history of the Church shows that men have always felt that agreement in the truth is the one principal ground of unity, and that disagreement upon the most fundamental parts of the Christian heritage of truth is really incompatible with membership of the one body. It appears most unlikely that Christians of the present day will take a completely opposite view, and regard every possible doctrinal divergence as admissible within the one body. Consequently it seems to be a prerequisite of unity that there should be an understanding with regard to every question which is now thought to be vitally important, (a) whether any view of it will be insisted on by the reunited Church as a whole, (b) whether any view of it will be condemned by the Church, or (c) whether every known view, or any of several specified views, will be tolerated by that Church.

ARE DIVERGENCIES IN PRACTICE COMPATIBLE WITH UNITY ?

3. There is a similar problem about divergencies of practice. In the matter of Sacraments and Sacramental Rites the question is

perpetually recurring whether divergencies in practice can be tolerated side by side, or must the Church, in order to be one, agree on one practice. We suggest that here the test is, can those who adhere to one practice admit the efficacy of another practice, or do they feel that they must teach against it, not as a less good method, but as a method of no efficacy or as one founded on pernicious error? If it seems to be only a less good way, then surely the champions of the better way can have faith in the influence of their best way to prevail in the new atmosphere of love and confidence which will eliminate prejudice and unreasoning conservatism.

Some of us hold that at this point it would be logical to introduce the consideration of the differences in the doctrines of *grace* which have undoubtedly been influential in moulding the different types of sacramental teaching. But for the purposes of this statement it will suffice, as most of us think, to say that we are not unmindful of those differences or of their importance.

We pass, therefore, to the consideration of the two rites which all Christians call Sacraments.

1. Baptism. There is already a general agreement which we imagine will also exist in the reunited Church, that Baptism must be with water and in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. There is also a general agreement that though it is proper that Baptism should, whenever possible, be administered by an authorised minister of the Church, the administration of it by an unordained Christian person is not on that account invalid.

Beyond this we fail to find in our answers any further agreement. A cleavage reveals itself, which is probably one of the deepest cleavages between Christian men. It may be most briefly described by saying that the one type of opinion regards Baptism as operative, the other regards it as declaratory. Without entering into details or minor differences, we state the outstanding features of the two typical views.

The first view may be stated thus : God's purpose in Baptism is to make the person baptised a member of Christ and a child of God, washing away his sins and raising him from a state of death to a state of life in and with Christ. It is possible for man to impede or frustrate God's purpose in this, as in other matters, by shrinking back, by rebellion, by lack of faith, by various defects of

receptivity, whether at the time of Baptism or afterwards. But the purpose of God is whole and entire ; it is there, it has taken effect, however much or however little a man may avail himself of it or co-operate with it. The baptised person is a child of God, even if he remains unconscious of the fact or flings away his birth-right, and he is a member of Christ and therefore of His Church, even if he makes no use of his membership or spurns it.

Those who hold this view hold it as the view which has always been held, and believe it to be the only possible interpretation of the words of Scripture.

The second view may be stated thus : Baptism is a rite performed by the Church, by which the person baptised is declared to be among those for whom Christ died. It is also a means of receiving the person into the Christian community. In the case of a child, Baptism is further an undertaking on the part of the parents and the Church that this child shall be so instructed and brought up, that it may understand and in due time consciously embrace with faith the salvation offered by Christ. It is frequently said at the Baptism that the Baptism makes no difference to the child. It is only a preliminary admission of the child into the Church. He is really admitted only when he " joins the Church " and becomes a full member or communicant. With the Baptists, Baptism itself is postponed till a person can have conscious repentance and faith. But even when Baptism is administered to adults, all who hold this type of view regard it as merely a declaration of an adoption of a person by God as His child, which has happened previously, and a consequent admission of him to the Church.

This view, *mutatis mutandis*, appears to be widely held in Protestant Churches ; so far as regards the solely declaratory character of Baptism, the Baptists are in agreement with it ; but there are Protestant Churches in which, though the doctrine of baptismal regeneration is not held, the idea of baptismal grace is by no means excluded.

As all these Churches acknowledge no other authority for their doctrines but Holy Scripture, and that same authority is claimed for the other view, it would seem that the most urgent necessity is a reconsideration of the meaning of the relevant Scriptures. If this could be undertaken after agreement had been reached on the general lines of the earlier paragraph in this statement headed

“ God’s part and man’s part ”, it is surely not beyond hope that an agreement could be reached on the scriptural doctrine of the meaning of Baptism.

There are other disagreements about Baptism which, though not comparable in importance to that concerning its meaning, are the occasion of much strong feeling.

These concern the method of administering Baptism and the age at which it should be administered. On these points the question which is important for the reunion of Christendom is how far the united Church as a whole can tolerate these divergent views. We suggest that a united Church might contemplate the possibility of recognising that parents or communities of persons within it should habitually postpone the Baptism of their children or adherents till such an age that the person baptised can consciously experience repentance and faith ; but this recognition could only be given on the condition that they should not deny the efficacy of the Baptism of persons baptised in infancy. Similarly, and with more confidence, we suggest that the united Church would have no objection to communities within it making a practice of Baptism by immersion, so long as those communities do not deny the efficacy of the Baptism of those who are baptised by affusion. We are not aware whether Baptism by sprinkling is tenaciously held by any Christian communities as the best or only proper method of Baptism. In comparison with the other two methods it has so little authority in Scripture or custom that perhaps it might be voluntarily given up in view of union.

The opinion that if any person wishes to be a member of Christ, and consequently of His Church, it is his duty to be baptised, is very ancient and very generally held. The existence of the Society of Friends and of some other persons who are not baptised but call themselves Christians, and whose life is held in honour by all Christians, challenges this opinion in a striking manner. The united Church must deal with the question thus raised when it deals with membership. But the fact that Friends in some of their foreign missions allow the Baptism of their converts, in order that they may in this matter be not separated from other Christian converts of the same race, may serve to indicate the direction in which the solution may be expected.

2. The Lord's Supper. With regard to the Lord's Supper, the existing agreement among Christians is perhaps greater than is generally recognised.

There is a prevailing intention to do what the Lord did and commanded and to receive what He intends to give. We gather from our answers that these might be accepted by the united Church as the only *necessary* intentions either for a celebrant or a recipient of the Lord's Supper. But the actual agreement of all Christians at the present time goes beyond this. We believe that it would be true to say that it is generally agreed that (1) this Sacrament is a commemoration of the Lord's death ; (2) that in it our Lord is present to faith in all His saving power ; (3) that in it the believing partaker feeds upon Him in a spiritual manner, and has his union with his Lord renewed and strengthened thereby ; and (4) that through renewed and strengthened union with the Lord he renews and strengthens his union with the other members of His Body.

There is also agreement that the matter of the Sacrament is bread and wine, though some Christians use unfermented grape-juice, while others deny that its use is permissible, because it is not wine.

It would be agreed that some prayer is necessary for the hallowing of the bread and wine to their sacramental purpose, and probably all Christians would concur in using the Lord's words at the institution of the Last Supper in the course of those prayers, or at least somewhere in the service.

There are very serious disagreements among Christians which centre round the conceptions of " the real presence " and of sacrifice, and also with regard to the relation between the minister of this Sacrament and the validity or efficacy of the rite.

We believe that the comparatively modern changes in the conception of reality entertained both by philosophers and ordinary people make it possible to review the doctrine of the presence of our Lord in the Sacrament with more hope of agreement than has existed for many centuries. Again, there is a greater and deeper knowledge about the meaning of sacrifice in this generation than at any time since the greater part of the Christian world ceased to be in daily proximity to the actual offering of Jewish or ethnic sacrifices. We believe that frank discussion in an atmosphere of mutual respect and conciliation would remove many misunderstandings, and might lead to a measure of agreement

which seems impossible so long as sympathetic consideration of each other's opinions is wanting. Here, as in other connections, it will need to be considered whether there are any views which, if held, are fatal to reunion ; that is to say, whether considerable bodies of Christians would refuse to be members of a united Church in which it is permissible to hold and to teach those views. We record that the answer to the question, " Who is the proper minister of the Lord's Supper ? " is not only given differently by different bodies of Christians at the present time, but the differences derive a peculiar importance from the fact that Churches, including together a large majority of the Christians now living, hold that, unless the minister of this Sacrament has been duly ordained by a duly consecrated Bishop, the rite which he celebrates is not the Lord's Supper, or at least there is no certainty that it is so. This contention is regarded by those Churches who have no such ministers as having been proved false *a posteriori* by their experience of grace received from the Lord's Supper as celebrated among them. Many would add that it is also *a priori* false, because the question, " Who is to be the minister of this Sacrament ? " can be at most a matter of discipline, and is subject to regulation at the discretion of the Church or of any organised part of it.

On these very serious disagreements we offer five observations :

1. It is common ground that whatever act of power or grace is done in this Sacrament is done by God and not by man, and the minister is only God's instrument in all that he says or does in this Sacrament.

2. It is also common ground that whatever is offered, whether thanksgiving or prayer or the self-devotion of the members of Christ in and with our Lord's own self-devotion, is offered by the whole congregation present on behalf of the whole Church, and the minister in no sense acts for himself but for the congregation and the Church in these things.

3. From this we draw the conclusion that the minister ought to be so ordained that he receives a commission to act for God and to represent the whole Church before God in this Sacrament. If the Church had a universally recognised ministry, as suggested in the Statement on the Ministry, these conditions would be fulfilled.

4. If, then, there were a universally recognised ministry to whom the ministration of this Sacrament was confined, the question whether it is invalid, if ministered by anyone else, would never arise. Believing as we do that it is a fundamental necessity of union to have such a universally recognised ministry, we submit that the united Church will have no need to discuss the question about the validity or invalidity of the Lord's Supper, if ministered by persons outside that ministry, because it will never be so ministered. We submit, further, that it is not a prerequisite of reunion to discuss that question, but it is necessary to determine how a universally recognised ministry may be regained.

5. On the question, " Who is the proper minister of the Lord's Supper ? " we record that there are Christians who, on the ground of the " priesthood of all believers, " hold that an unordained man, if duly selected and authorised by the Church or " a Church, " may be a proper minister of this Sacrament, but that the overwhelming majority of Christians now living, as in former ages, support the opposite view, both in theory and practice, that the only proper minister of this Sacrament is a person authorised in virtue of his ordination to celebrate it. The question of the manner in which such a person should be ordained belongs to the subject of the ministry.

NOTE. Although important problems arise in connection with other rites to which the name of Sacrament is widely (but not universally) applied, it is not proposed, that the attention of the Conference of 1927 shall be invited to discuss those problems.

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